

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, we have the opportunity today to take care of some very important unfinished business. We left town last year without ensuring that millions of American jobseekers could retain access to vital unemployment insurance. I hope we correct this and restore the Federal unemployment program, the Emergency Unemployment Compensation program, which was allowed to expire on December 28.

Unemployment insurance has helped tens of millions of Americans weather the storm of the difficult economy over the last several years. It has helped workers put food on the table, kept a roof over their heads, and kept millions out of poverty.

But because Congress has so far failed to extend it, 1.3 million Americans were abruptly cut off from their vital unemployment insurance the week after Christmas. And over the course of this year, another 3.6 million Americans will be cut off from unemployment insurance as they exhaust their State benefits and have nowhere else to turn. That is a total of 4.9 million Americans—including 35,500 Iowans. They have spent 6 months or more trying to find new work, going out and pounding the pavement day after day, but must now worry about how they and their families and children are going to survive. How will they keep up with their heating bill, their rent, their car payment, or their mortgage?

We used to all agree here in Washington that if you lose your job through no fault of your own, especially at a time of chronic unemployment, you should have some support while you're looking for new work. The American people certainly agree. A poll released last week shows that 55 percent of voters say that Congress should act to maintain the program.

Unfortunately, some people in this chamber seem to think that the misfortune of losing a job means that these hardworking folks are to blame, or that they don't deserve this basic lifeline. Some here in the Senate have even called it a "disservice" to continue this program. That kind of harshness toward people who are trying to

do the right thing but who are victims of circumstance is simply wrong.

Jobseekers are not sitting around watching TV and collecting compensation they don't deserve. In fact, participation in the unemployment insurance program requires that workers have a significant work history—which means they have paid into the system and earned this insurance. Collecting on the insurance also requires workers to have lost their job through no fault of their own, and to be actively looking for work. Participants in the program are playing by the rules. It is now our responsibility to make sure that workers who are out of luck in this economy have some basic income to make ends meet.

The fact is times are still tough and jobs are hard to come by. For every job opening there are three job seekers. That is why so many millions of workers have been searching for new work for such a long time. The American people know this, too. In last week's poll, 57 percent of voters said that the unemployed "would rather work, but cannot find a job in today's economy."

Although the payments under the Federal program were modest—after cuts due to sequestration, payments averaged just \$269 per week—these funds were crucial for keeping households afloat. For many, this is their last lifeline. If Congress fails to restore the Federal program, millions of people will face real economic devastation.

Also, we have to remember that unemployment insurance is not just a lifeline for families, but for our economy as a whole. After all, one of the best ways to grow our economy and to create jobs is to support spending power. And that is exactly what unemployment insurance does. When unemployed workers can continue to pay their bills, businesses can continue to make sales and provide services, and the economy grows. The Congressional Budget Office has found that unemployment insurance is one of the most efficient policy tools we have to improve economic growth. If the Federal unemployment insurance program is restored and extended through 2014, it will increase GDP by 0.2 percent and create 200,000 jobs. Those jobs will be lost if we do not act.

Congress has a long history of acting to ensure basic security for working people during tough economic times. In the past, when the job market was this challenging, politicians on both sides of the aisle agreed that the Federal Government had an obligation to step in and help the long-term unemployed while they are struggling to find a work. Indeed, the current program of extended unemployment benefits was put in place in 2008 by President George W. Bush when the unemployment rate was 5.6 percent. While unemployment is falling, it is still at a high rate, 7.0 percent. And that's just the official rate. Unofficially, when we include those folks who want to work full-time but can only find part-time

work and those who have given up actively looking for work, the rate is actually 13.2 percent.

Long-term unemployment has been at record highs for years. Currently 37 percent of unemployed workers have been looking for new work for at least 6 months. Congress has never allowed Federal unemployment insurance to expire when more than 23 percent of unemployed workers were long-term unemployed.

Our economy is recovering, but we are not there yet. American jobseekers and their families still need Federal unemployment insurance. Our economy needs these families to have some basic means of survival. There is no justification for not restoring the current program. This is a modest, short-term extension of 3 months. I would prefer to see us approve a year-long extension, so that families who rely on the program have peace of mind that they will not be cut off from this lifeline again. But I am pleased that Senator HELLER has joined with Senator REED, myself, and others to put forward this proposal.

Congress has an obligation to restore and continue the Federal unemployment insurance program to ensure that Americans and their families can survive while trying to get back on their feet and find new work. They are depending on us. I urge the Senate to act to restore the Federal unemployment insurance program.

#### ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

##### JACKSON, MISSOURI

• Mr. BLUNT. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize Jackson, MO, as it celebrates its 200th anniversary in 2014. Jackson is a proud community with a long history of hard work and an unmistakable spirit of community.

Founded in 1814, Jackson is the county seat of Cape Girardeau County in southeast Missouri. With only 300 residents at its founding, the town still supported five stores, two shoemakers, and a tannery—a thriving hub for the time. Jackson's growth has been slow and steady, but stable. Today, nearly 14,000 people live and work in Jackson.

As it embarks on its 200th year, Jackson is one of the fastest growing communities in Missouri. Its city slogan, "The City of Beautiful Homes, Churches, and Schools," aptly represents a community committed to progress and improvement. In 2009, Money Magazine named Jackson 59th on its list of best small towns in the United States. With the many thousands of small towns across our country, this is a considerable distinction—although, to be sure, Jackson is worthy of a spot much higher.

Jackson's small town feel makes it a great place to call home. The citizens come together for events ranging from the annual Independence Day celebration in the city park, to its